

Landscape

Aesthetics at its best

A sculpture artist by profession, master of bonsai, Rudi Nayon is a landscape designer, with his own philosophy attached to each landscapes at Surup Bonsai Village



Rudi Nayon



The landscaped pathway

A resident of Indonesia, Rudi Nayon has achieved his life's ambition at Surup bonsai village in India. His dream has come true. By education Rudi is a sculpture artist and well-adapted to the art of bonsai. He has landscaped Surup Bonsai village in a unique style, by using stones, grasses, lillies and lotuses to bring forth many innovations in the landscaping field.

Spread over three-and half-acres, Surup bonsai village is an hour's drive from Mumbai. With a towering mountain in the background, it has a scenic beauty of its own. Surrounded by green paddy fields and a mountain stream flowing in the backyard it provides all the ingredients of a paradise in this earthen melting pot. The pull of this earth is so strong that Rudi visits this place at least twice in a year and every time he stays for more than a month.

The total area of Surup bonsai village is being landscaped and designed by Rudi in a very fluid manner. All material used for landscaping is local except for some Zen stones that are thousands of years old and they come all the way from Himalayas.

Do not make the mistake of calling Surup bonsai village as a plant nursery. One can wander around and see each corner, skillfully landscaped. There are water bodies at each step, a desert garden covering almost 2000 sq ft of area, Zen gardens in small doses, amidst a bonsai display garden. A windmill, with the wind pushing the blades, whirling round and round in rhythmic strokes, makes you wonder if it is a fantasy. Let me not forget the kitchen garden that I saw getting transformed

under Rudi's expert guidance. The landscaping is very fluid for two reasons. First, it definitely cannot be called a defined garden, because of lined up bonsai, row after row. It is a skillfully landscaped garden, because even after going through these rows of bonsai, one never feels, he has walked through a row of well-displayed plants. Each bonsai is a song by itself, aesthetics at its best, and then suddenly you stumble upon a pond, full of Water Lilies, with grass growing in one corner, swaying to the mountain breeze. A tall flowering creeper and a small Zen garden displayed in a corner makes you stop and think.

The whole area vibrates with soft music of Buddhist Thai flute and Jal tarang. Water mist is sprayed, section-by-section, all over the place. Not a spec of dust can be seen anywhere. How has this been achieved? Surely, Rudi, with his teammates Sujay Shah and Rupa Shah, has worked wonders. This couple works harder than Rudi, to bring reality to his dream. The farm belongs to none other than Sujay and Rupa and Rudi is the architect of the Surup Bonsai Village. I call them a mad trio, the way they keep working from 6 am to 12 pm!

Even the area where all the plants are kept under programming look very neat and tidy. The roadside pathways are again landscaped to merge with the surrounding beauty.

Rudi has programmed the entire working force of Surup Bonsai Village. He has been programming as much as 100 plants per day. Styling and pruning takes much more time, so only few numbers are done in a day. Sujay showed a group planting of some very unusual plants to me. Cascading Cyead, Nolinus,





Desert garden with local stones



Stones from Himalayas



Zen garden



Waterbodies

were a few of them. An entire area was being prepared for shohin bonsai. According to Rudi it is more difficult to make a shohin than a medium or big bonsai.

Three years back when I met Rudi, we could not communicate, as he could not speak English, but his hands could communicate with you. Now we could sit at the kitchen garden that was under construction and chat in English. Here it goes for the readers to understand his dedication and passion for landscaping, bonsai and gardening.

I asked Rudi what he thought of Surup bonsai village. He stated that, "It was his dream come true". He had always wanted a display garden and he has almost achieved it. When asked on the intensive use of rocks, he stated that looking around the hills he felt it was indeed a binding factor with the surrounding area. These stones are brownish black and denote strength. Any arrangements made with these stones bring out the local flavour of flora and fauna. The stones used for the Zen garden are different and give you an impression of age, maturity with the element of environment such as rain, storm and speed. These were collected from the Himalayas. They are as much as three thousand years old at least. They have a metallic sheen

on them and the sediments flowing in the river can only achieve such deep depression on them.

Did he plan the garden three years back? "No, it is spontaneous and its design comes alive as and when we reach the particular spot." On the desert garden he said, "Sujay is very fond of cycads. The combination of stone and cycad brings out the rigidity of growth and it is symbolic of hard life and arid set up".

According to him, "a garden without soul is nothing. Here we have sat and planned a garden with a soul. Be it stone arrangement, or water body, or display area, all are harmonious and balanced." According to him, "we are blessed with five senses and these should get stimulated, as you enter the area. Like us even plants are living being and they also generate good or bad vibrations. A messed up place and anesthesically designed and kept bonsai will not pull you and bring you this far to meet me". Why has he not introduced huge sized bonsai? "If it is huge, you can only view it from a particular place. You cannot shift them in, neither you can change the style easily, as in other medium-sized bonsai. It is not very easy but difficult to provide a soul to huge bonsai. Smaller ones are aesthetic and



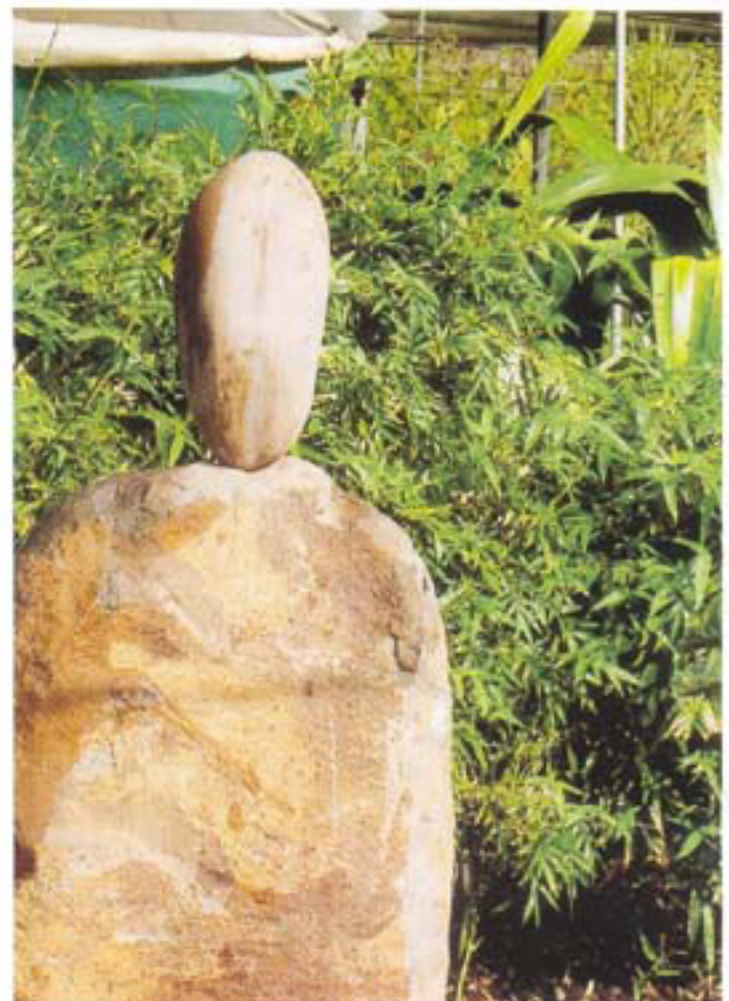
Landscape with Himalayan stone

balanced. They respond well to your training and we both grow wise together."

Music is played in the garden continuously, according to Rudi "Hearing is one of five senses. Plants respond in the same fashion as human beings. They like smooth classical music and thrive on it as it provides, energy to the plant. If you take two plants and play soft classical music to one plant, it responds by growing healthy with buds and flowers. A harsh music played to other one, will make it stressful and it will droop and look ill". Flute and drums are favourites of plants.

Rudi felt we in India have only one or two kinds of stones and one colour that makes the penjing or landscape very monotonous. We have to search other stones as well with keen observation power. It is all there strewn around you, only you must have an eye to pick it up.

I asked him, since he has experienced our climate what would be the plant specie he would recommend to bonsai lovers. According to him "the best plants to use in a climate like Mumbai is Ficus retusa, Ficus microcarpa and Ficus high land." Benjamina is difficult to turn into bonsai. The arial roots of the Banyan tree are phenomenal. If pruned and repotted scientifically, one can get smaller leaves as well. An old



Upper stone balances without any support

established bonsai will survive the shock and produce smaller leaves but in a newly repotted bonsai, every time you prune a leaf you must remember that a tender root may die if the timing of pruning is not correct.

The balance and harmony works in every landscape design and in each bonsai- in roots and pruning, in shape and size, in trunk and branches, in pot and plant. Optical balance has to be achieved through visual artistry. Therefore our fundamentals have to be very clear. The line and form of any landscape design should not disturb the optical balance. The same could be said about landscape design of Surup bonsai Village. Nothing looks out of place and jarring to the eye. The sense of delight registers as your eyes travel from one landscape to other. Time was running out and I could see Rudi was itching to go back to his designing of the kitchen garden. I left our discussion at that point because of shortage of time, deciding to visit him once again if Sujay permits. I wanted, for our readers, Rudi's ideas on soil, shape and on programming of bonsai. Landscaping of entire Surup village, and designing of bonsai, speaks of his versatile personality.

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